

ARKANSAS APIARY NEWSLETTER

State Plant Board - Apiary Section

#1 Natural Resources Drive

Little Rock, Arkansas 72205

Telephone: 501/225-1598

apiary@aspb.ar.gov

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Recent Apicultural Events

The Heartland Apicultural Society (HAS) had their annual conference in July in Indiana. It was a great event and attended by many to hear the presentations of experts at all levels.

This year's Eastern Apicultural Society's (EAS) short course and conference took place in Georgia and was a great hit. Speakers came from USDA labs, university programs, apiary inspection programs and as far away as England, Ireland and Australia. Dr. Denis Anderson, the discoverer of Varroa destructor and re-known Asian honeybee and parasite expert, gave several presentations that were quite exciting.

The topics at these conferences were numerous, but we'll try to hit some of the more pertinent news that came up:

Integrated Pest Management (IPM)

There was news of our growing understanding of many of the parasites and viral diseases that have been plaguing our industry. Presentations also explained some new understandings of both the bees' defensive mechanisms and our growing arsenal of tools to deal with these predators. Much energy has been put into Integrated Pest Management methods and tools as well as the genetic selection of our bees to deal with the problems themselves.

Varroa

In the area of Varroa destructor, we are gaining new understandings of how it enhances viruses and the damage those viruses are doing. At the same time we are gaining tools in both number and variety. This puts beekeepers on the cutting edge of staying ahead of these rascals. With more and varied tools, there's less of a need to use "hard" chemicals that are leaving residues and damaging our bees and their products. It also leaves those "harder" chemicals in the wings, waiting for the time when they're really needed. Besides the many "soft" chemicals that are now available, various mechanisms of hygienic behavior are proving very effective, especially when appropriately chosen and used in combination with other mechanical or cultural tools. Much emphasis was given at these conferences to the efficacy of the "newer" tools and the gains that can be made in using queens of stock that has been selected and tested for defensive tendencies against these mites. Along those lines, the genetic trait that was previously named the Suppressed Mite Reproduction (SMR) is now better understood and has been more accurately renamed as the Varroa Sensitive Hygienics (VSH) trait because of its method of detecting and removing reproductive mites. Likewise, the Russian, the New World Carniolan and the Minnesota Hygienic bees are all showing gains.

Small Hive Beetle

In the Small Hive Beetle arena, things are looking up also. The work toward effective lures and traps is progressing and showing great promise. In-hive traps with innocuous lures are moving to the forefront along with a biological control for the ground around the hives where

the beetle larvae must go to pupate. Tests have demonstrated that of the many nematodes out in the world, there are two that are demonstrating their skill in breaking the breeding cycle of the beetles by feasting on them in the soil. Of course, since the beetle larvae do the most damage to the hive prior to entering the soil, nematodes must be used in combination of some method, such as trapping, the adults prior to their turning to the larval stage. Of course keeping strong colonies is also a good defense. But doing that in combination with trapping and breaking the development cycle of the beetles is a great, integrated approach.

Africanized Honeybees

Of course there was much talk about the spread of the Africanized bees (AHB) both on the positive, but mostly on the negative side. It has been clearly demonstrated that not only will these bees survive in latitudes further north than earlier thought, but also that they have done a lot of moving in the colonies of migratory beekeepers. That said, migratory beekeeping is becoming a more and more valuable part of American agriculture. So it becomes a situation of regulations, controls and compliance that will minimize the risks to the public and the liabilities of the beekeepers. The spread of these unwanted cousins of our western honeybee has been dramatic in Florida in the last few months and its presence in the bees pollinating blueberries as far north as Maine has been eye opening. Kansas is now on the watch and Arizona has found survivor colonies of AHB at elevations approaching 8,000 feet. While the human death rate is not rising, stinging incidents seem to be up. In some areas of Florida, water meter readers have had to hire pest controllers to precede them to the boxes. One of the problems is that it's the drones that carry the "grumpy gene" and by the time the beekeeper realizes that his bees are becoming overly defensive, the drones have been doing their job in the neighborhood. It is critical for the future of the beekeeping industry that beekeepers actively participate as part of the solution and not facilitate the movement of these bees. Actively participating must include the cessation of swarm catching in areas at risk of having Africanized bees, re-queening colonies with bees of known, European heritage (queens & drones), and purposefully promoting the production of ample European drones around apiaries. Likewise, it is counter-productive for city or county ordinances to be made to rid areas of bees. Without also riding the area of flowers, nature will fill the void with other pollen and nectar seeking insects and this is merely an invitation for AHB to move in. And of course, it continues to be important that we spread the word that the work of the honeybees is important to agriculture and the ecology.

Now, on a more positive note, researchers are working toward more effective methods in identifying the African genes. Through the Honeybee Genome Project, it has been demonstrated that some of the "mean genes" can be pinpointed. While it is still some way off, some day we will have an ELISA test (not unlike pregnancy test kits) that can tell us if bees are African, Africanized or European. In the meantime, Arkansas is looking into the possibility of setting up a laboratory for distinguishing between African, Africanized, and European bees.

The Season in Arkansas

This has been a mixed year. Some areas have been reporting an abundance of nectar while others have been not so blessed. The weather dictates much of what happens for the bees and, to date, this has been a hot and dry summer. We hope your bees are well fed and that they brought in, for your pleasure and profit, some honey that surpasses their needs.

The Apicultural Events Up-Coming

The State Beekeeper's Annual Meeting

The annual meeting will be held October 6-7th at the Ozark Folk Center in Mountain View, Arkansas.

Mountain View, Arkansas is located in the North Central Ozark Mountains. The town is host to folk music, town square pickin' and grinnin', world class trout fishing on the White River, and many Ozark music and craft festivals. More information about Mountain View can be found at www.ozarkgetaways.com

Topics for the conference are currently being set. Please mark your calendars and watch this publication for further information. Or visit our website at www.arbeekeepers.org

For those interested in attending please fill out the registration form on our website at www.arbeekeepers.org and mail to:

Arkansas Beekeepers Association
Howard Waddell, III, Treasurer
1838 Hwy 318 So.
Marvell, AR 72366

Hotel Information:
Ozark Folk Center
1032 Park Avenue
Mountain View, AR 72560
(800) 264 - FOLK
www.ozarkfolkcenter.com

Heifer Range Program

Heifer Ranch is a hands-on learning center providing education that promotes sustainable solutions to global hunger, poverty and environmental degradation. It is located in Perryville, Arkansas (45 miles from Little Rock).

Service activities each week are "themed" to particular programs or enterprises that occur on the Ranch. **"From Bees to Honey" will take place September 17 – 22, 2006**

Help us with our beekeeping from start to finish! Remove honey boxes from the hives and extract the honey. Inspect and prepare the hives for winter. Prepare honey for selling - bottle the honey, seal the bottles in melted beeswax and label for sale.

For more information, contact the Ranch Events office at 501-889-5124 or ranchevents@heifer.org. You can register on-line at www.heifer.org/ranch. Follow the links from "Programs for Individuals and Small Groups."

Beekeeping Classes

As you can see from earlier parts of this newsletter, beekeeping is changing rapidly. Classes have proven to be an excellent way of keeping up with best practices. It's time to start planning this fall's Beekeeping Classes. The Plant Board, in conjunction with the Extension service or beekeeping groups offers beekeeping classes in late fall and late winter around the state wherever beekeepers or "wantabees" want to help organize one. There's been some interest in central Arkansas this year, either in the Little Rock or Conway area. We can also do some in other areas. Let us know if you're interested.

The classes usually run 4 evenings in a month and run about 3 hours each evening. Books are available for the classes at discounted prices but are not mandatory. Other than that, the only expenses are for the cost of copying the handouts, which are plentiful.

Beekeeper Association Meetings and Events

Check our web page for Beekeeper Associations in your area, their meeting and event dates and contact information. Our Web page is www.plantboard.org. From there, go to Plant Industries and in Plant Industries you will find Apiary.

County Fairs

Many regional associations sponsor booths at the county and, even, the state fair. It's a great place to volunteer, educate the public about honey products and the importance of honeybees and to socialize. At some of the county beekeeping booths, beekeepers sell their surplus product. You might consider promoting honey competition at your county fairs and putting some of your prize jars in the state competition. Contact your regional association to get involved.

Web Page

Our webpage holds lots of information, past and present newsletters, links to other beekeeping pages and much more. Check it out at www.plantboard.org. From there, go to Plant Industries and in Plant Industries you will find Apiary.